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Northwestern Junior College

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Finding Aid

NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE RECORD GROUP

NORTHWESTERN JUNIOR COLLEGE

1928 - 1960

NCRG 2

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Introduction

The Northwestern Junior College (NWJC) subgroup of the Northwestern College Record Group (NCRG) documents the life of the NWC institution which was added to the Northwestern Classical Academy (NWCA) in 1928. The records include catalogs, promotional materials, newspaper articles, accounts ledgers, minutes, scrapbooks, diplomas, photographs, and memorabilia. Collectively, these archives provide evidence for the development of faith-based higher education in the maturing Dutch American communities of northwestern Iowa, southwestern Minnesota, Nebraska, and the Dakotas.

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Historical Notes

The Academy (adapted from the Northwestern Classical Academy [finding aid](#), rev. 2015)

Dutch settlers from Pella, Iowa purchased land in Sioux County and founded Orange City as the center of a northwest Iowa colony in 1870. By the summer of 1882, the colony was large enough and stable enough to launch a private educational institution. Such an institution had been in view from early on, since the town-site by-laws provided for setting aside one-fifth of the proceeds from the sale of town lots for a “college.”

On July 19, 1882 Northwestern Classical Academy (NWCA) was created. Under the leadership of the Rev. Seine Bolks (retired from the pastorate of First Reformed Church, Orange City) and Henry Hospers (farmer, store and land office proprietor, notary public, county supervisor, newspaper editor, and banker), NWCA was incorporated with a constitution, by-laws, and a Board of Trustees. Hospers donated the land and led in pledging funds on August 1, in words of the formal subscription list, “for the building and maintaining of such Academy.” NWCA opened for instruction in Orange City in the fall of 1883.

The purpose of NWCA was, according to its 1882 constitution, to be “an Institution of learning for the promotion of Science and Literature in harmony with, and Religion as expressed in, the Doctrinal Standards of the Reformed Church in America” (Article II). It was a “Classical” Academy not only because of its curricular emphasis on language and literature, but also because it was “to be under the care of, and subject to, the supervision of the Classis of Iowa of the Reformed Church in America” (Constitution, Article III). This classical supervision was directly expressed in the composition of the Board of Trustees. Originally, the [Iowa Classis](#) was to appoint the trustees (Article VII). Later, after jurisdictional reorganization, [East Sioux](#), [West Sioux](#), [Dakota](#), and [Germania](#) Classes—particularly the first two—were entitled to elect significant specified proportions of the Academy Board.

While the trustees administered the property and finances of NWCA and oversaw the doctrinal and education integrity of the institution on behalf of the churches, a principal led the daily operations. The turnover of instructors at the academy was generally high, due to low and sometimes uncertain pay, changing curriculum, and heavy teaching loads. Principals not only served as administrators, they also taught, and, when necessary, went beyond their normal loads in order to fill in curricular gaps.

From its inception, the academy accepted girls as well as boys. Preparation for college and for ministerial studies or mission work was stressed. A Classical Course of studies was designed for those preparing for the ministry. For those not intending to go into the ministry, there was a Modern Classical Course. A Normal Course was in place by 1908 for those intending to teach. Whichever course was chosen, all Academy students took courses in Bible (Old Testament the

first two years, New Testament the junior and senior years), 4 years of the Heidelberg Catechism, English, and mathematics, 3 years of history, and 2 years of Latin.

At first, rooms were borrowed for classes at First Reformed Church and at the local public school. In early 1884, a two-story wood frame building—the Pioneer School—was erected for the Academy. This was replaced by the purchase and remodeling of an abandoned two-story wood plank skating rink (formally named Academy Hall, but informally dubbed the Rink and also Noah’s Ark). Continued growth led to the sale of the Rink and the building of a new Academy Hall, a vertically imposing classroom and administration building opened in 1894. Done in Richardsonian Romanesque style, the three-story red brick structure, trimmed with light tan stone, and with a cornerstone motto DEUS EST LUX (God is light), was renamed Zwemer Hall in 1924, perhaps for the entire Zwemer family, not just Principal James Zwemer. It was added to National Register of Historic Places in 1975 and extensively renovated in 1995-1997.

In 1928, the Academy became a department in Northwestern Junior College and Academy (NWJC). When the Academy closed in 1961, NWJC had become Northwestern College (NWC), a 4-year Christian liberal arts institution of higher education.

The Junior College

From its beginnings, NWCA’s founders and supporters aspired to offer college-level education. Orange City’s town-site by-laws specified a “college” for a portion of the proceeds from lot sales. First-year college courses were actually offered in 1907-1908, but the three enrollees were not enough to sustain the program beyond one academic year.

By the 1920s, the difficulty that the Academy was having competing for students with the public high schools renewed efforts to launch sustainable college-level courses. With endorsements from West Sioux, East Sioux, and Dakota Classes, in June 1926 the NWCA Board of Trustees approved adding a junior college program. Desiring wider denominational support, the Academy board and administration then approached the Reformed Church in America (RCA). However, the proposed new program raised alarm among many supporters of the denomination’s two colleges, Hope (MI) and Central (IA); they worried that a Northwestern Junior College would take away students (and funds) which would otherwise go to Hope or Central. The RCA Board of Education studied the junior college proposal prior to the General Synod of 1928 and cautiously recommended support. The General Synod agreed to endorse the junior college—for a 3-year trial, with all financing left up to Northwestern and its local supporters. Furthermore, the General Synod stipulated that “the institution should remain a Junior College unless authorized by the General Synod to expand.”¹

Despite the less than robust denominational endorsement, Northwestern’s Board hired the Reverend Jacob Heemstra (1888-1958) in the summer of 1928 to be both principal of the Academy and also president of the new Junior College. Like the other 8 NWJC instructors that first fall, Heemstra did not have a doctorate. Born near Orange City, he was an Academy alumnus and a graduate of Hope College. However, besides earning a Western Theological

¹As quoted in Gerald F. De Jong, *From Strength to Strength: A History of Northwestern, 1882-1982* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, [1982]), 127.

Seminary degree (1914), he had taken graduate courses at Princeton University and the University of Chicago. In addition to parish work, he had been on the faculty of Central College (education, religion, and psychology), where he also had been registrar. (In 1939 Hope awarded him a doctor of divinity degree; thereafter, he was commonly referred to as Dr. Heemstra.)

When Heemstra retired from the presidency at the end of spring semester 1951, he had led NWJC in weathering the financial and enrollment challenges of both the Great Depression and World War II. The first college year was launched 1928-1929, and the sophomore year was added in 1929-1930. Ironically, then, the Junior College program was fully up and running just as the worst economic downturn in the history of the U.S. was unfolding. In the summer of 1931 the 3-year “trial” the RCA granted Northwestern ended. The General Synod renewed its endorsement, but the Junior College was hard pressed to collect tuition and pay faculty. (Income at NWJC for 1929-1930 was \$34,148; for 1931-1932 it declined by than half to \$14,966.) NWJC requested financial support from the RCA in 1932, and the General Synod agreed, but it left the amount up to the denomination’s Board of Education. The RCA Board recommended that the Junior College close “temporarily.” Heemstra rallied support and vigorously pushed back against the Board of Education. The Board retreated and eventually granted some funds to NWJC in 1933. Then ten years later, the Second World War brought a steep decline in Junior College enrollments (from 128 in 1939-1940 to 33 in 1943-1944). Faculty turnover was also up. Heemstra oversaw institutional retrenchment once again.

Nevertheless, by the mid-1930s, the Junior College was developed enough to sustain increased numbers of instructors (as many as fourteen full- and part-time), a student newspaper (*The Northwestern Beacon*), men’s basketball and football teams, and choir tours in college-owned buses. NWJC students remained largely local and from either the Reformed Church in America or the Christian Reformed Church.

After World War II, the times were flush, for the college as for American higher education more generally. Before President Heemstra’s retirement, a building was purchased for women’s housing (Dykstra Hall, 1945); an addition was made to the Science Hall (1947-1948; the original portion was opened in 1923); thirteen acres of land were purchased adjoining the campus on the east (1949-1950); and a new women’s dormitory was opened and named Heemstra Hall (1950; Dykstra Hall, enlarged in 1947, then became a men’s dormitory). However, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools declined to accredit NWJC in 1951. Accreditation was mandated by the Iowa State Board of Educational Examiners for all teacher training institutions, but NWJC in 1950-1951 still had, among other things, a faculty with meagre qualifications (no Ph.D.s) and a weak library collection.

The Reverend Dr. Frederick H. Wezeman (Calvin Theological Seminary; LL.D., John Marshall School of Law) succeeded Jacob Heemstra as NWJC president. Wezeman moved to head a hospital in the Chicago area in 1954, but before he left, he oversaw Northwestern’s reapplication for accreditation. The North Central Association accredited NWJC in 1953. Also before Wezeman left, yet another addition was made to Science Hall (Van Peursem Hall, 1952-1953).

Even before the Junior College was accredited, Northwestern leadership was planning for a full 4-year college program. Given that the RCA had provided financial support for NWJC but had

also limited the college to a 2-year program, President Heemstra approached the RCA for its endorsement for a 4-year program at some future time. The General Synod agreed to remove the 2-year restriction in 1949, but by a narrow margin of 2 votes. The strong opposition reflected both continuing concern to not weaken support of Hope and Central Colleges and also Northwestern's unfamiliarity to the RCA community in the East.

In 1955 Dr. Preston J. Stegenga (Ph.D., University of Michigan), a graduate of Hope College, became the third and final president of NWJC. He would also become the first president of Northwestern College, the 4-year institution that was fully in place in the fall of 1960. (Stegenga stayed into 1966, when he moved to the University of Liberia.) Before adding the fourth year of college-level courses in 1960-1961 and the graduation of the last Academy class in 1961, Stegenga oversaw expanding the faculty to eighteen full-time (including 2 with doctorates) plus 8 part-time. Also during the final years of the Junior College, a multi-purpose Auditorium was built (1956-1957), Colenbrander Hall opened as a men's dormitory (1959-1960), and a new president's home (1959-1960) replaced the older one, which eventually became Campus Cottage (1964).

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Related Materials

The history of Northwestern College is recounted in Gerald F. De Jong, [*From Strength to Strength: A History of Northwestern, 1882-1982*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., [1982]).

In 1928, when the Junior College was launched, [*The Northwestern Beacon*](#) became the student publication during the academic year.

In the Northwestern College Archives, on NWCA, see the [Northwestern Classical Academy](#) (NWCA) subgroup. See also the Trustees' Records, the Jacob Heemstra Papers, and the Jacob Heemstra, F.H. Wezeman, and Preston J. Stegenga Presidential Records.

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Arrangement and Series Description

Series 1, Catalogues: Catalogues for the Junior College run from 1928-1960. (The title of the catalogue from 1928-1951 was *The Classic*. The same title was used earlier for the Academy's first student publication and later for the College's magazine for alumni and friends.) To date, no catalogue for 1929-1930, 1941-1942, 1951-1952, or 1952-1953 has been found. Academy material is included in the Junior College catalogues. The catalogues are clearly being published in the latter year of dates on the title page (e.g., if 1928-1929 is on the title page for the catalogue, publication was in 1929); thus, the information on students and other people is largely retrospective as the academic year draws to a close. They also usually contain statements of the mission and purpose of the College and its relation to the Reformed Church in America which,

over time, get rewritten, reflecting shifting emphases. Frequently, the catalogues contain narratives or chronologies of the history of the College.

Series 2, Miscellaneous Documents: The miscellany includes promotional literature and bulletins, clippings, minutes, accounts, songs and yells, and arguments for a junior college program and support from the Reformed Church in America. There is information on the drowning of a professor and students in 1934. There are a set of reminiscences covering the 1950s-1960s. There is information about a 1933 pageant. There is a binder on faculty credentials. There are diplomas. Finally, there is a DVD of 1940s- and 1950s-era films of the Junior College and Orange City.

Series 3, Photographs: The majority of the photographs are of Junior College and Academy classes. Others photographs are of faculty, staff, board, buildings, and activities. An album includes particularly fascinating photos of 1950-1951.

Series 4, Student Scrapbooks: This series contains 6 different scrapbooks, notes, and memorabilia of students, mostly about the Junior College but also some about the Academy.

Series 5, Objects and Memorabilia: Included in this series are many letters and patches. Other things include hats, capes, a sweater, a cap, a beanie, and a ring.

SERIES 1, CATALOGUES			
BOX	FOLDER	CONTENTS	DATES
1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Classic, New Series, vol. 1, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog No. 45. (2 copies.) 	1928-1929
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Classic, New Series, vol. 3, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1930-1931. (2 copies.) The Classic, New Series, vol. 4, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1931-1932. 	1930-1932
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Classic, New Series, vol. 6, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1932-1933, 1933-1934. The Classic, New Series, vol. 7, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1934-1935. The Classic, New Series, vol. 8, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1935-1936. The Classic, New Series, vol. 9, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1936-1937. 	1932-1937
	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Classic, New Series, vol. 10, no. 1. 	1937-1941

		<p>Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1937-1938.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Classic, New Series, vol. 11, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1938-1939. • The Classic, New Series, vol. 12, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1939-1940. • The Classic, New Series, vol. 13, no. 3. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1940-1941. 	
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Classic, New Series, vol. 14, no. 3. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1942-1943. • The Classic, New Series, vol. 15, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1943-1944. • The Classic, New Series, vol. 16, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1944-1945. • The Classic, New Series, vol. 17, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1945-1946. • The Classic, New Series, vol. 18, no. 2. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1946-1947. • The Classic, New Series, vol. 19, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1947-1948. 	1942-1948
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Classic, New Series, vol. 20, no. 2. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1948-1949. • The Classic, New Series, vol. 21, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1949-1950. (2 copies.) • The Classic, New Series, vol. 22, no. 1. Northwestern Junior College and Academy. Catalog Number 1950-1951. 	1948-1951
2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwestern Junior College and Academy Catalogue. (Bound volume.) 	1935-1949
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwestern College Catalog, 1953-1954. (2 copies.) • Northwestern College Catalog, 1955-1957. • Northwestern College Catalog, 1956-1957. 	1953-1957
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwestern College Catalog, 1957-1958. 	1957-1960

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northwestern College Catalog, 1958-1959. Northwestern College Catalog, 1959-1960. 	
	4	Miscellaneous bulletins: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alumni Roster, 1946. The Orange Book, 1950-1951. The Orange Book, 1951-1952. Supplementary Bulletin, Announcements, 1952-1953. Supplementary Bulletin, Announcements, 1953-1954. (2 copies.) Official Bulletin, 1958? (2 copies.) 	1946-1958

SERIES 2, MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS			
BOX	FOLDER	CONTENTS	DATES
1	1	NWJC & NWCA promotional literature	1930s-1950s
	2	Clippings, misc. (one explaining <i>Beacon & Classic</i> , 1930)	1930, 1946
	3	Letter, invoices, list regarding science supplies, Wilkens-Anderson Company	1928-1929
	4	Arguments for NWJC, misc. (ms., <i>Classics</i> , clippings, typescripts, etc.)	1924-1933
	5	Northwestern Junior College and Academy Bulletin. (3 copies.)	August 1928
	6	Arbor Day. (Clipping.)	1932
	7	Withdrawal from consideration for accreditation. (Letter.)	1949
	8	Statement of Purposes (typescript) and Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws (booklet).	1950, 1951
	9	Selected Family Remembrances of Joe and Marie DeVries. [Joe DeVries, Dean of Business Affairs, NWJC/NWC, 1954-1971.]	1996
	10	Spirit of Northwestern Pageant program. (Photocopy.) (See LD 4011 .N492 H43x c.1, Rare Books, for script.)	1933
	11	Drowning of Prof. Blackburn & 4 students. (Clippings.)	July 1934
	12	Songs and yells.	1893, 1930s, 1949-1950
	13	Forms	?
	14	Certificates	1954, 1956
2	binder	Board of Educational Examiners [Records].	1941-1951
3	ledger	Accounts, NWJC & NWCA.	1936-1943
4	binder	[Miscellaneous minutes, schedules, procedures, etc.]	1949-1951
	binder	[Miscellaneous minutes, schedules, procedures, etc.]	1951-1953
5	binder	Faculty credentials.	1928-1945
6	1	Diploma of Adelphos Anthony Dykstra	1930

	2	Diploma of Gertrude Bernice Brink	1937
	3	Diploma of Gertrude Louise Dykstra	1954
	DVD	Film of NWJC and Orange City	1940-1942, 1954

SERIES 3, PHOTOGRAPHS			
BOX	FOLDER	CONTENTS	DATES
1	1	Students-groups (NWCA & NWJC)	1930s-1950s
	2	Sports teams (NWJC)	1928-1948
	3	Faculty (NWJC & NWCA)	1928-1961
	4	Faculty & students (NWCA & NWJC)	1926-1932
	5	Classes (NWJC)	1940s
	6	Activities (NWJC)	1930s-1940s
	7	Alumni/ae (NWJC)	1949
	8	Board members (NWJC-NWCA)	?
	9	Staff (NWJC-NWCA)	1940s-1961
	10	Students-miscellaneous (NWJC)	1930s-1940s
	11	Band & orchestra (NWJC-NWCA)	1929-1948
	12	Costume party (NWJC)	1937
	13	Choir tour (NWJC)	1938
	14	Choir & soloists (NWJC)	1928-1948
	15	Theatre (NWJC)	1930s-1940s
	16	Buildings (NWJC)	1955
	17	Miscellaneous (NWJC)	1930s-1950s
2	1	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1932
	2	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1939
	3	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1940-1941
	4	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1941-1942
	5	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1942-1943
	6	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1943-1944
	7	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1944-1945
	8	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1945-1946
	9	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1946-1949
	10	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1948-1949
	11	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1949-1950
	12	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1950-1958
	13	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1951-1952
	14	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1952-1953
	15	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1953-1954
	16	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1954-1955
	17	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1955-1956
	18	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1956-1957
	19	Students (NWJC-NWCA)	1957-1958

	20	Athletics (NWJC-NWCA)	1930s-1941
	21	Athletics (NWJC-NWCA)	1941-1949
	22	Athletics (NWJC-NWCA)	1950-1957
	23	Music (NWJC-NWCA)	1941-1949
	24	Music (NWJC-NWCA)	1950-1957
	25	Classrooms (NWJC-NWCA)	1949-mid-1950s
	26	Graduates (NWJC-NWCA)	1946-1957
	27	Board of Trustees (NWJC-NWCA)	1940s-1960
	28	Theater (NWJC-NWCA)	1950-1960
	29	Personnel (NWJC-NWCA)	1928-1960
	30	Alumni activities (NWJC-NWCA)	1950s
3	album	The Northwestern Story in Pictures	1950-1951

SERIES 4, STUDENT SCRAPBOOKS			
BOX	FOLDER	CONTENTS	DATES
1	scrapbook	[NWCA Scrapbook], Marcia Hubers (Zwiep)	1937-1941
	scrapbook	College, Marcia Hubers (Zwiep)	1941-1943
	hanging folder	Class notes, etc., from Marcia Hubers (Zwiep)	1937-1948
	scrapbook	Academy Days, Lois Hubers	1948-1951
	scrapbook	My Last Two Years at Northwestern, Lois Hubers	1951-1953
2	scrapbook	Memories of Northwestern Junior College & Academy	1954?
	folder	Memorabilia of NWJC-NWCA, Adrianna Schiebout (Ruisch)	1950-1952

SERIES 5, OBJECTS & MEMORABILIA			
BOX	FOLDER	CONTENTS	DATES
1	hats	Raider Red, NJC "brand" (2)	1950s?
	hats	Raider Red, no "brand" (2)	1950s?
	sweater	N letter sweater (NWCA?)	?
	cape	Raider Red, gold, silk, NJC "brand"	1950s?
	cape	Raider Red, gold, silk, no "brand"	1950s?
2	letter	Music	1932
	patch	Music	?
	patch	NWJC Music (Rev. Harold Colenbrander)	1939
	beanie	Northwestern red and white beanie	?
	cap	NWJC marching band cap with tie	?
	beanie	NWJC green and white beanie (donor: Gertrude Brinks Kraai)	?
	patch	NWJC academic honor (donor: Lois Muyskens Hector)	1943

	patch	NWJC WAA	?
	letter	NWJC letter in gymnastics (Clarence Buurman)	1934
	ring	NWJC class ring (Cornie Keunen)	1948
	certificate	Dramatic award for Mrs. England	?
	Folder	NWJC Miscellany: student receipt, E. Corene Vander Stoep, 1942; NWJC envelope, postmark 1931; report cards, Geraldine Van Wechel, 1930-1932	1942, 1931, 1930-1932